

USAID STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE AMAZON BASIN CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

CONSERVING BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN THE AMAZON BASIN

**Strategy Document for Public Discussion
June 1, 2005**

I. OVERVIEW

USAID recognizes that designing a conservation strategy to respond to the economic significance and geographic scale of conservation threats in the Amazon Basin requires bringing together results-oriented interventions at the basin-wide level with complementary on-the-ground conservation activities. In response to this challenge, USAID is initiating a new Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative (ABCI), described in this strategic plan. To maximize ABCI impacts within the Basin, USAID will take a two-pronged approach, supporting both a series of site-based interventions in selected catchments, or sub-basin areas¹, and a series of regional coordination, priority setting, training and policy activities.

In order to build interest in and commitment to both the financial and institutional conservation investments proposed within the Initiative, USAID solicits public input on this strategy. USAID would welcome comments on both the overall strategic approach and the proposed thematic and geographic investments, including implementation ideas and opportunities for collaborating with other ongoing or planned conservation programs. (See Section XI: Request for Public Comments).

II. INTRODUCTION

A. The Conservation Challenge

The Amazon Basin holds the largest area of contiguous and relatively intact tropical forest in the world. The drainage areas of this river basin system possess 20% of the planet's freshwater resources, and support critical aquatic habitats and ecosystem processes. While these biological assets could provide a sound foundation for regional development, they are instead threatened by unsustainable uses associated with agriculture, ranching, logging, mining, petroleum exploration, and fishing. These threats, in turn, are driven by forces such as population growth, infrastructure development, expanding commodity markets, insecure land and natural resources tenure, and distorted policy incentives. This web of threats and drivers is complex and operates from the local to regional and international levels. Weak

¹ A sub-basin or hydrologic landscape smaller than the entire river basin, but large enough to drain into a major tributary of the Amazon, and support ecosystem processes at a landscape scale.

enforcement of environmental laws and regulations undermine efforts to protect these valuable biological resources. This, in turn, is fueled by corruption, a lack of overall law enforcement capacity, lack of coordination among and between national, provincial and regional agencies, and low levels of human and institutional governance capacity in many situations across the Basin.

To date, approximately 15% of the Basin has been deforested. Continued large-scale deforestation within the Basin may disrupt local and regional climate processes, resulting in less rainfall with far-reaching impacts on biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries and the livelihoods of indigenous people who have lived in the Basin for millennia. Sound development options with the potential to equitably benefit the approximately 30 million residents of the Amazon basin must be a key component of addressing these conservation challenges. In addition, climate change could be accelerated on a global scale due to Amazon Basin environmental degradation. Conserving the region's biological diversity requires large-scale approaches that address both threats and drivers at local, national and regional levels.²

B. Rationale for a Regional Program

Given that many of the threats to biodiversity in the Basin and, thus, potential opportunities for USAID to respond are transboundary in nature, resource management practices and policies must be developed and negotiated among regional partners. Shared learning among stakeholders and conservation agencies will be most effective when it takes into account the basin connections that traverse municipal or national lines. Adjusting and harmonizing practices and policies will require new communication networks, collaborative efforts and building the capacity of local and national governments and of other partner organizations for coherent and systematic impact. Likewise, increasing effective enforcement capacity within a democratic and regional-scale framework of environmental governance could avoid the current problem of pushing illegal activities from one country into another. A regional approach that includes increased enforcement capacity and cooperation among governments and civil society organizations will be best positioned to leverage opportunities for comprehensive responses to transnational threats such as illegal logging, wildlife trade, fire and the downstream effects of soil and water contamination and habitat conversion.

An integrated program embracing the entire Basin ecosystem also can best support the multiple-scale interventions needed to conserve the Basin's biodiversity, including better cooperation and communication. A regional approach by USAID can foster shared learning and action on environmental governance amongst municipalities that share international borders and amongst the environmental ministries via cooperation with the Amazon

² Adapted from NRIC. 2005. Conserving Biodiversity in the Amazon Basin: Context and Opportunities for USAID. Chemonics: Washington, D.C. (See Annex A for the full report and Executive Summary)

Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). The potential to add value to and leverage existing regional efforts of ACTO and other institutions while catalyzing improved transparency of governance at other scales further justify USAID's design and implementation of a Basin-wide initiative.

Along with many other private and public agencies, the U.S. Government (USG) has a long-standing portfolio of biodiversity conservation investments in the Amazon region. These include initiatives to combat illegal logging, conserve wildlife and habitat, improve forest management, promote the integrated management of water resources, strengthen environmental compliance and enforcement by local governments, and build the capacity of national and local organizations, both in the public sector and civil society with the latter including programs with indigenous groups, other local and traditional communities and private sector interests. USAID invests approximately \$36 million annually in Amazon conservation activities, which contributes to an estimated total annual investment in regional conservation by private, bilateral and multilateral donors of over \$200 million.

Yet, these investments are dwarfed by the magnitude of the scale of effort needed to counteract and reverse the ongoing threats to conservation that include inappropriate infrastructure development, unplanned frontier expansion and the destructive extraction of natural resources. USAID recognizes that additional investment is needed, not only in terms of financial support, but also and perhaps more importantly, in terms of building institutional commitment and capacity for conservation throughout the Amazon Basin and across civil society organizations, the private sector and public agencies. USAID is committed to making investments for lasting and measurable conservation impacts through partnerships with these stakeholders and in synergy with the programs and policies of other donors and U.S. government agencies.

III. U.S. INTERESTS AND USAID'S AMAZON BASIN CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

A. The Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative

Large-scale approaches by USAID to promote conservation in the Amazon Basin will require close collaboration and linkages with other USG agencies, other donors and local actors and authorities. Consequently, USAID plans to invest in a strategic conservation program to support and improve ongoing USG efforts in the Basin and will coordinate with other donors, national governments, and public and private organizations to seek value-added results through a regional approach. This flagship program, known as the Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative (ABCI), represents a strategic investment by USAID to address conservation threats and opportunities on a regional ecosystem scale, complementing the strong and long-standing conservation programs of USAID and others and recognizing the urgent need

to act decisively and effectively to conserve the Basin's unique biodiversity treasures and environmental functions. This document presents a five-year strategy for the Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative.

USAID envisions the Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative as a synergistic partnership that builds upon the institutional capacity, networks and conservation knowledge generated by the programs of USAID Missions, other USG agencies, and bilateral and multilateral donors and implemented by a broad range of partner organizations in the Basin. In so doing, USAID seeks a regional conservation impact that is greater than the sum of the parts. USAID has and will continue to consult widely with other stakeholders, including USAID Missions, USG agencies, non-governmental organizations, private foundations, and bilateral and multilateral organizations. These programmatic leaders in Amazon conservation have laid a strong foundation of partnerships, research, policies, and technical and organizational capacity with which ABCI will collaborate and build synergy.

B. The Context Of U.S. Government Amazon Programs And Policies

Given the complexity of conservation threats in the Basin and the need to design coordinated responses, USAID is dedicated to designing and implementing the Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative in collaboration with the ongoing and planned programs of USG agencies and other donors. The U.S. Government has a broad range of policy, trade and technical assistance programs within the Amazon/Andes countries and USAID will synergistically engage with the agencies responsible for these in order to add value. Throughout both catchment-level investments and the region-wide approaches, USAID will continue to seek out and build upon partnerships with other USG agencies. Section VI proposes that USG information-sharing groups meet at the national level in order to catalyze and sustain collaborations between USAID's Amazon program and other USG activities. Existing and potential collaborative efforts include sharing knowledge and networking opportunities on environmental governance, compliance and enforcement, technical assistance and training, market and producer network opportunities, and environmental diplomacy.

Specific programmatic opportunities for USG collaboration include the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance process, the President's Initiative Against Illegal Logging, environmental cooperation under Free Trade Agreements, the G-7 Pilot Project to Conserve the Brazilian Rainforest (PPG7), indigenous area management and capacity building, wildlife and forest cover monitoring and watershed and protected area management. With regards to PPG7, USAID will explore opportunities to integrate with the research networks of the Directed Research (Science II) program and to build upon earlier PPG7 experiences in monitoring and community mobilization, for example.

C. The Initiative And Other USAID Programs

Within USAID, ABCI will work closely with Mission-led environment and biodiversity programs and to design cross-sectoral conservation applications with democracy and governance, education, economic growth and health programs. While USAID will focus its site-based ABCI investments in those countries with USAID-funded environment programs in the Basin, which include Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil, ABCI also will invest in region-wide efforts for networking, capacity building and policy applications for conservation. In partnership with regional organizations including ACTO, COIAB, the Amazon Alliance and others, USAID will seek to implement these latter region-wide investments with the member countries of the Amazon Treaty, as appropriate according to respective activities.

IV. APPROACH OF THE AMAZON BASIN CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

A. Principles and Vision of the USAID Regional Conservation Strategy

USAID and other donors must invest in opportunities that yield maximum conservation benefits while making the best use of respective institutional mandates. In order to survey potential opportunities, USAID contracted an assessment report (See Annex A: "Conserving Biodiversity in the Amazon Basin: Context and Opportunities for USAID") and has solicited significant input from partners which, taken together, presented a wide range of opportunities for USAID action.

Within this array of worthy options for investment, USAID has identified several key focal points for the ABCI. One important focus of the ABCI will be the management needs of conservation and special use areas under the control of indigenous, traditional and other local stakeholder communities and their organizations. The territories covered by the umbrella term of sustainable use zones, encompassing indigenous areas, communal reserves, extractive reserves, integrated management areas, etc., represent one appropriate niche for USAID's investment as they embody the combined objectives of biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and improvements in human well-being through economic growth, democracy and transparent governance, health and education.

ABCI also identifies key opportunities for USAID in terms of building capacity and commitment within civil society and government agencies for the development and implementation of effective public policies for conservation. The application of best practices for natural resource management in selected areas by well-designed partnerships that bring together the assets of key stakeholder groups across civil society, the private sector and public agencies will be another investment focus of ABCI. In addition, ABCI will seek to bring innovative financial mechanisms to bear on the sustained implementation of these practices, policies and strengthened institutional capacities.

Across all activities, ABCI will focus on two cross-cutting approaches: (1) empowering and building the capacity of local and national organizations and governmental agencies and (2) embedding feedback mechanisms for learning and applying adaptive management. As noted below, these interests represent a broad range of investments, some of which will be prioritized for USAID funding under the Initiative based on input from a public discussion period and on opportunities to leverage resources of other donor programs.

1. Basic Principles of the USAID Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative

USAID understands that investments in biodiversity conservation will be most effective when made jointly with improvements in human well-being and in a context of strong institutional commitment and capacity. USAID acknowledges the value and necessity of adaptive management in undertaking a regional strategy and is committed to learning from previous conservation and development efforts. USAID commits to the following principles within the Amazon conservation initiative:

- a. Focus on measurable and sustainable results and not just processes and outputs;
- b. Build on existing capacities, empower local and national organizations and recognize the necessary investments of time and other resources this implies;
- c. Learn as the program develops and adaptively manage, harvesting from present and past experiences;
- d. Apply competitive processes to generate innovative approaches for biodiversity conservation;
- e. Foster effective partnerships amongst civil society, public agencies and the private sector;
- f. Communicate well, regularly and creatively;
- g. Build consensus around regional goals;
- h. Secure and sustain regional buy-in for and ownership of the program from institutions and communities engaged in conservation;
- i. Respect rights and cultural diversity and integrate issues of gender, ethnicity, age, equity, and transparency into all appropriate activities;
- j. Establish and ensure close working relationships with strong regional counterparts;
- k. Manage and lead the regional program effectively, recognizing its unique role complementary to bilateral initiatives; and
- l. Take appropriate and bold risks in light of the pervasiveness and power of conservation threats.

2. USAID's Conservation Vision for the Amazon Basin

USAID strives for an Amazon Basin in which indigenous and traditional peoples, other conservation stakeholders, and key institutions achieve the

commitment, capacity and cooperation to be effective stewards of the Basin's globally important biological diversity and environmental services.

B. Objectives of USAID's Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative

To achieve this vision and apply these programmatic principles, USAID must define and maintain a focus on a select number of conservation investment opportunities that are within the Agency's manageable interests and in concert with those of other USG agency, donor and national government programs, and that can be absorbed and implemented effectively within the region. Within this focused approach, USAID remains committed to flexibility and to adaptive management as the program evolves. USAID will focus its regional conservation program on the following objectives:

1. Conserve globally important biodiversity managed by indigenous and traditional groups and other host-country organizations; and
2. Achieve regional cooperation to share knowledge, improve governance, and build alliances across borders that improve the conservation of the Amazon Basin's natural resources.

C. Partnerships

1. Partnership Approach and USAID Interests

As noted in the introductory text, USAID will build the Initiative's investments upon a philosophy and practice of working in partnership with communities, civil society organizations, private sector stakeholders and governmental agencies at multiple levels. Throughout the program, USAID is committed to empowering and building the capacity of local, national and regional partner organizations in civil society and public sectors.

A cornerstone of this collaboration among various programs and ABCI will be an invitation for partners, technical experts, USG agencies and other donors to participate in an Advisory Panel for the Initiative, as described in more detail in Section VI: Program Management. This forum will provide regular meeting space for sharing advances and challenges in the participants' Amazon programs and for providing guidance and input to the ABCI.

USAID will seek to define mutual interests within a rights-based approach with local and regional organizations in the selected catchment landscapes and to address region-wide opportunities for building on the assets and conservation interests of indigenous and traditional groups. Since private-sector partnerships represent strategic intervention opportunities to abate critical threats and take advantage of market-based solutions, they are of key interest under ABCI. Working together with social development and conservation organizations and other civil society groups is a key focus of ABCI partnership interests, as is sharing new and

traditional knowledge through centers of learning, applied research and training.

In order to increase transparency, access to information and effective enforcement capacity in the selected catchment areas and across the region, ABCI must build upon USAID's historical collaborations with governmental partners at local, national and international levels. As local governments assume increasing responsibilities and explore opportunities within decentralization processes for co-management of protected areas, valuation of ecosystem services, and land use planning, USAID is committed to partnering with appropriate agencies and building necessary capacity. At national and international levels, USAID is equally interested in strengthening ongoing national government partnerships for addressing natural resource management, environmental enforcement and compliance, resolution of resource tenure processes and conflicts, infrastructure development and related policies.

2. USAID Partnership with the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization

USAID and the Amazon Treaty Cooperation Organization (ACTO) plan to develop a collaborative partnership, which will be formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding. Through this partnership, USAID/ABCI and ACTO will identify and collaborate on activities in coordination with implementing partners, as appropriate.

USAID and ACTO envision a partnership that builds on ACTO's regional integration for policy interventions, inter-governmental collaboration and civil society strengthening for conservation cooperation with USAID's region-wide approach of networking and training. The Treaty Organization and ABCI share common goals of biodiversity conservation and natural resource management, knowledge sharing and management, regional integration and competitive processes, and institutional strengthening. Shared programmatic foci also underpin the potential power of a USAID-ACTO Amazon conservation partnership including water and forests, protected areas, indigenous peoples, land tenure, and social development through health, education and economic growth.

3. Illustrative Partners

The following is a list of illustrative partnership categories with which ABCI will consider collaborating on both catchment-level and region-wide investments:

- a. Indigenous and traditional organizations
- b. Local, national and international non-governmental organizations
- c. Local and national governments
- d. USG agencies

- e. Private sector organizations
- f. Universities, educational programs and technical/research centers
- g. Regional training centers

V. ABCI PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

A. Overview of Program Structure

USAID has designed the ABCI based on initial recommendations from partner organizations, USG agencies and lessons learned from other region-wide conservation programs. ABCI will also benefit from technical and policy guidance via regular interaction with USAID Missions, a USAID Implementation Team and an external Advisory Panel. This structure will ensure timely and appropriate input to the two major interactive ABCI components:

1. **Within key catchment areas³, results-driven investments to support natural resource management, governance and capacity building.**

Catchment areas will be selected for their biodiversity significance and for opportunities to address critical conservation threats. The catchments will be a primary source of shared learning for regional application; leveraging on-the-ground experiences in strengthening the environmental governance of indigenous and traditional groups, governmental and non-governmental organizations; increasing the use of best practices for managing landscapes and natural resources; applying financial mechanisms for conservation; and improving compliance with laws and implementation of public policies. These catchment area partnerships will constitute the primary clientele served by the region-wide component for networking, exchange visits, training and program monitoring.

2. **Region-wide networking, training and monitoring to build sustained collaboration, capacity and commitment for biodiversity conservation.**

This component will bring together key conservation stakeholders from government and civil society to leverage policy interventions, share knowledge and build alliances across borders and conservation issues. Region-wide learning and partnership building themes may include, but not be limited, to indigenous peoples' issues, forest monitoring, enforcement and environmental governance and environmental funds. Sharing knowledge among selected catchment areas will also be a focus of this component and will include topics such as co-management of protected areas, capacity building of indigenous organizations, land use

³ A sub-basin or hydrologic landscape smaller than the entire river basin, but large enough to drain into a major tributary of the Amazon, and support ecosystem processes at a landscape scale.

and economic planning and compliance with environmental laws, and market mechanisms for conservation.

B. Implementation Mechanisms

As described above, USAID has designed ABCI with two distinct, yet complementary components that together will meet the Initiative's objectives and strive towards USAID's conservation vision for the basin. Because the conservation challenges and opportunities for each component will differ substantially in terms of thematic scope and geographic scale, USAID will tailor its investments accordingly. In order to call upon the best fit of organizational and individual capacities and skills for catchment-level and region-wide programming, USAID will compete and award two types of implementation mechanisms within the Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative: one or more cooperative agreements for the catchment-level activities and one contract for regional-level coordination. These mechanisms are described in more detail below.

1. One or more cooperative agreement(s) for on-the-ground conservation investments in selected catchment areas.

a. Overview of Catchment Investments

USAID will invest in site-based interventions in selected catchment landscapes for integrated resource management at the scale of a coherent ecological unit within the larger Amazon River Basin complex. ABCI will support the building of partnerships among local organizations and diverse stakeholders to address the complex threats and opportunities facing the conservation of biological diversity in these selected catchment areas. USAID anticipates investing in at least three catchment areas over the next five years of ABCI.

Cooperative agreement(s) will be funded in two phases: a design phase and an implementation phase in order to allow for alliance building prior to USAID approval of program implementation. Initial investments during the design phase will focus on building partnerships within the catchment-level areas which include strong leadership roles for local organizations and on defining training and networking opportunities in conjunction with the regional component contractor. After review and approval of catchment-level program and partnership designs, USAID will fund implementation efforts.

This two-phase process within the cooperative agreement(s) will provide sufficient time and resources needed to identify and form coalitions of indigenous and local communities, local and national organizations, private sector stakeholders, and others in order to address the complex threats facing biodiversity conservation in selected catchments. It also will provide for substantial USAID involvement in ensuring that the catchment-level consortia are

designed to empower and build the capacity of indigenous and traditional organizations as well as national and sub-national partners. USAID has chosen the cooperative agreement mechanism for this component of ABCI particularly for the advantages of building lasting capacity with a broad range of local and national partner organizations.

b. *Relationship between Catchment-level Agreement Implementers and the Region-wide Component*

The design-and-implement approach also will provide time and resources to begin building partnerships among the catchment consortia and the regional contractor (i.e., defining training and networking needs and interests) to define initial means of cross-consortia networking and learning to be facilitated by the contractor.

c. *Initial Evaluation Criteria for Catchment Level Cooperative Agreements*

The evaluation criteria for the agreement(s) will encourage the formation of consortia with proven expertise and capacity to carry out Priority Activities, listed below. (See section “V.B.4. Illustrative, Priority Activities for Regional-wide and Catchment-Level Components”). The evaluation criteria will encourage strong leadership roles for national NGOs and will require a significant match from interested parties. The CTO for the agreement(s) will be the Coordinator for ABCI in the Office of Regional Sustainable Development in USAID’s Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC/RSD). USAID Mission staff will be Activity Managers for projects within their respective host countries.

d. *Initial Criteria for Selecting Catchments*

USAID will use the following criteria in selecting catchments:

- i. Biodiversity significance. In general, this entails areas with exceptional levels of endemism and/or large expanses of biologically valuable habitat;
- ii. Potential to abate critical threats;
- iii. Capacity to contribute to the regional component through knowledge generation and transfer;
- iv. Significant presence of indigenous and traditional communities concerned with the wise use of their biological diversity;
- v. Demonstrated interest and commitment by these communities and local organizations to participate in program activities;
- vi. Support of local organizations and national governments for planned activities;
- vii. Catchment area located in one or more of the following national territories: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and/or Peru; and

- viii. Preference given for transboundary areas, areas facing significant threats or those presenting timely and unique conservation opportunities.

2. One direct contract to design and implement the regional component

a. Overview of Region-wide Investments

Overall, the regional-level activities will seek to:

- i. Foster regional cooperation and communication, convening key actors and supporting networks across governmental and civil society organizations to address priority areas of action; and
- ii. Assess and share lessons from conservation efforts, prioritizing learning amongst the selected catchment(s) on mutually defined topics.

For illustrative purposes, action areas for cooperation and communication may include: public participation in natural resource planning and implementation, forest monitoring, regulatory enforcement, natural resources management at various levels (from local to river basin), and sustainable financing strategies including the management of national environmental funds). Topics for sharing lessons learned, etc., will be defined jointly during the Initiative and may include examples such as co-management of protected areas, applied techniques in mapping and spatial analysis, forest certification, integrated water resource management, valuation of environmental services, etc.

The selected contractor will prioritize learning and networking within and amongst the selected catchment areas, supporting the management of the various multi-stakeholder conservation partnerships and providing training, tools and networking on catchment-specific and region-wide conservation issues determined by the consortia. Detailed, annual workplans developed with USAID will form the basis for program implementation under the contract. The contractor will organize and implement a competitive, small grants program to apply innovative conservation approaches of indigenous and sub-national organizations within the catchment areas. The contractor will convene key conservation stakeholders for leveraging policy interventions, sharing knowledge and building collaborative alliances across borders and conservation issues, working closely with the Amazon Conservation Treaty Organization.

b. Process for Developing Region-wide Contract Activities and Relationship between Catchment-level and the Region-wide Component

USAID has selected a direct contract for this component of the Initiative as it allows the Agency to operate a regional program

effectively, maintaining the regional character of that program while reducing USAID's management burden and allowing for sufficient USAID technical guidance throughout the program. The activities to be carried out by the selected contractor will be demand-driven by the needs and interests identified by the catchment-level consortia and USAID and informed by input received during the public discussion period for this strategy. Illustrative activities are suggested below and are open to review.

c. Initial Evaluation Criteria for Region-wide Contract

The evaluation criteria for the contract will heavily favor consortia with proven expertise in indigenous and development issues, private-sector partnerships for biodiversity conservation, environmental governance and capacity building. The evaluation criteria will encourage strong leadership roles for national NGOs, universities and technical organizations and other partners with proven expertise in these areas. The evaluation criteria will require a significant match from interested parties, with additional matching resources favored in the criteria. This contract will be managed by the Amazon Coordinator in LAC/RSD. USAID Mission staff will be Task Managers for activities within their respective host countries.

d. Illustrative Region-wide Activities

Initial activities specific to the region-wide component may include the following:

- i. Working closely with the catchment-level consortia of partners to define and meet individual training, institutional capacity building, and networking needs and interests within each catchment and across the catchment areas;
- ii. Conducting exchange visits among participating countries to help identify and replicate best practices. Such visits will be demand-driven, but examples could include sustainable forest management, wildlife management, enforcement, control and surveillance of indigenous and other protected areas, and integrated watershed management;
- iii. Providing short-term technical assistance to assess policy options, support replication and scaling up of improved management techniques, and promote sustainable financing mechanisms;
- iv. Carrying out a competitive small grants program to stimulate innovative conservation partnerships and approaches and to support nascent organizations;
- v. Under USAID direction, coordinating with other donors and governments on environmental policies and programs;

- vi. Making appropriate arrangements for technical assistance by relevant USG federal agencies; and
- vii. Supporting overall program management by preparing comprehensive annual work plans (integrating the Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative to complement development efforts by Missions, other USG Agencies and key partners), developing a performance monitoring plan with indicators and targets, reporting on program performance, and assisting USAID in developing communication tools for the program (e.g., success stories, brochures, website and maps).

3. General Implementation Considerations

The Request for Assistance (RFA) for the cooperative agreement(s) and Request for Proposals (RFP) for the regional contract will be written to ensure effective coordination and collaboration among the partners implementing the agreement(s) and the contractor, so as to add value and avoid duplication of effort for regional partnerships and networking activities. In part, this will be achieved via joint programmatic meetings with all implementers on a quarterly basis as the initiative gets underway, transitioning to biannual meetings as appropriate. In addition, the USAID Program Implementation Team and the external Advisory Panel will guide the Initiative for maximum benefit to catchment-level consortia and to broader networks supported by the Initiative. USAID's close coordination with the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, in particular, will ensure best value-added for the Agency's region-wide networking efforts. USAID encourages cost-sharing and public-private partnerships to support the ABCI, as indicated by the proposal of requiring substantial matching funds within the respective evaluation criteria of the two mechanisms. USAID views partnerships as an effective means to leverage funding, knowledge and in-kind support, thus adding value to program investments and building complementarities with programs of other donors.

As described above, USAID intends to foster the formation of effective coalitions of partners regionally and within each selected catchment area. A focus will be on strengthening the leadership capacity skills of local and national organizations, to the extent feasible, while striving to attain Initiative outcomes. USAID is committed to adding value to and engaging strategically with existing networks focused on conservation knowledge and practices, protected area and resource management, integrated water resource management and other Amazon basin management issues and approaches.

4. Illustrative, Priority Activities for Region-wide and Catchment-Level Components

USAID recognizes that multiple opportunities to invest in conservation activities exist within both the regional and catchment-level program

components. Consequently, the groups of activities listed below represent a broad set of possible interventions under this Initiative. Taking into consideration the programmatic investments and directions of other donors and other USG agencies, USAID will prioritize the possible activities listed below and will select from the investment options presented and refined within the competitive procurement process. USAID may not be the sole source of funding for all elements of the program, and will especially seek to support those activities that maximize synergies and leverage resources of programs of other donors, governments and the private sector.

- a. Strengthen environmental governance of indigenous and traditional organizations, governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations in selected catchments and in regional networks. Build on existing assets to strengthen partners' skills in promoting environmental governance particularly effective participation, enforcement of environmental laws and implementation of policies (e.g., boundaries, land tenure and land use), and transparency.
- b. Improve and support implementation of public policies for conservation and sustainable natural resources management.
- c. Increase the use of best practices for managing landscapes and natural resources by government agencies and civil society, including the private sector.
- d. Strengthen the application of financial mechanisms for conservation.

5. Illustrative Selection Criteria for Catchment-level and Region-wide Activities

USAID will apply the following illustrative criteria to identify potential activities for support under the program:

- a. Provides opportunities for measurable results within five years. Results may be either biophysical (e.g., reduced deforestation) or changes in the actions of key actors that contribute to conservation (e.g., better management practices are implemented by extractive industries);
- b. Addresses the "Criteria for Selecting Catchments", described above;
- c. Presents strong likelihood of replicating successful activities;
- d. Demonstrates consistency with national government priorities;
- e. Encourages public-private partnerships;
- f. Contributes to a balanced portfolio of early, visible results from practical activities with innovative and risky yet potentially high-impact efforts;
- g. Empowers local, national and regional organizations (as appropriate) to design and implement program activities;
- h. Complements programs of USG agencies and other donors;

- i. Empowers stakeholders to revive and value sustainable, traditional practices and knowledge sets for natural resource management; and
- j. Promotes the integration of social analysis (including gender, ethnicity, and age), equity issues, good governance principles and environmental compliance and presents opportunity for regional/international agreement with common standards.

VI. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

USAID will manage the overall program from Washington, D.C., relying on a high degree of programmatic Mission involvement and guidance from both a USAID Program Implementation Team and an external Advisory Panel. USAID's Latin America and Caribbean Region/Regional Sustainable Development office (LAC/RSD) is committed to adding value to both the catchment-level and region-wide investments through collaborative management of the ABCI, fostered by frequent engagement with Missions and joint visits to the selected catchment areas. USAID can best accomplish these goals by basing the program in Washington for the next five years and maximizing interaction with other Amazon-wide programs. As it has done throughout the design phase of the Initiative, USAID will continue to promote ABCI through the following:

- Coordinating with other USG agencies carrying out Amazon Basin and related activities (e.g., Department of State/Offices of Oceans, Environment and Science (OES) and Western Hemisphere Affairs; (WHA), and the Brasilia Environment Hub; U.S. Department of Agriculture/Forest Service and Foreign Agriculture Service; Department of Interior/Fish and Wildlife Service and National Parks Service; U.S. Trade Representative; Department of Justice; Department of Commerce; Environmental Protection Agency; the Inter-Agency International Indigenous Issues Working Group (I3WG);
- Leveraging USAID investments through counterpart organizations with regional Amazon programs including ACTO, Organization of American States (OAS), World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Global Environment Fund (GEF), Amazon Alliance, COICA and private foundations;
- Facilitating comprehensive reporting and communication across the region-wide program to a number of audiences via USAID, Congress, partners, etc.; and
- Engaging frequently with other USAID Bureaus that are managing regional and global conservation programs (e.g., Global Conservation Program, Congo Basin Forest Partnership/CARPE, Central American Program for Protected Areas/PROARCA, etc.) for shared learning.

LAC/RSD will oversee overall implementation of the program. This will include: developing comprehensive annual work plans and budgets through a participatory process, obtaining Mission concurrence for in-country activities

funded under the program, reporting on progress (preparing regular reports, e.g., six months and annual progress reports), and responding to information requests. LAC Bureau management is expected to determine annual budget allocations for the program.

LAC/RSD will organize regular meetings of key Mission staff and partners to review implementation progress, identify planned activities, share lessons learned, and recommend annual budget allocations.

LAC/RSD will organize a Program Implementation Team comprised of USAID Mission staff from the Amazon region, other regional programs and technical Bureaus to guide program-wide learning and to ensure internal USAID coordination and communication through, for example, biannual meetings, participation in Mission-program partner meetings and joint visits to selected catchment areas. Working together with USAID Mission and other USG agency colleagues, ABCI will seek to foster national-level information-sharing groups within the USG in order to better operationalize ABCI activities within the broader context of USG programs.

LAC/RSD will organize an external Advisory Panel of key stakeholders, USG counterparts, regional experts and partners to review progress and direction, and provide overall policy guidance to the program.

LAC/RSD will oversee mid-term and final program evaluations.

VII. EXPECTED RESULTS AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

A. Achieve Measurable Results

The Initiative will achieve measurable results in strengthening the capacity of indigenous and other organizations and agencies to identify and mitigate biodiversity conservation threats in the Amazon. During the first year of the Initiative, results statements will be designed in conjunction with partners and implementers via development of a Performance Monitoring Plan. Within this process, intermediate results and indicators will be defined and will focus on the key elements of the ABCI program described earlier. Progress will be measured in the Initiative's achievements along the broad and illustrative lines of conserving biodiversity, building capacity, and improving and implementing policies, for example.

B. Monitor Performance

1. Assess progress in building the capability of local organizations to identify and address critical threats to biological diversity in the Amazon Basin.
2. Monitor the progress in building the capability of local organizations to improve the management of biologically important natural resources,

including monitoring changes in key biophysical indicators in a transparent manner.

3. Assess progress in formulating and carrying out proposed policy changes.
4. Assess the participation of indigenous and local people in decision-making forums such as land-use planning processes, zoning meetings, etc.
5. Determine area under legal control of indigenous and traditional communities with approved management plans.
6. Assess improved understanding among governments, non-indigenous NGOs and other key stakeholders of indigenous and traditional natural resource management practices and approaches.

VIII. ESTIMATED BUDGET

USAID investment of \$50 million is planned over five years.

IX. REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS, EVALUATIONS AND STUDIES

USAID will assess the environmental impacts of planned activities and obtain approval of the Bureau Environmental Officer of the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) prior to the obligation of funds. The IEE will identify expected negative environmental impacts and needed mitigation measures, and the need for additional environmental assessment(s) as appropriate. Other required assessments will include gender and social equity analyses.

X. ANNEXES

- A. “Conserving Biodiversity in the Amazon Basin: Context and Opportunities for USAID”. NRIC/Chemonics. Washington, D.C. April 2005
http://www.usaid.gov/locations/latin_america_caribbean/environment/

XI. REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

USAID is actively soliciting ideas and feedback on this strategy document. Interested parties are asked to submit comments via email in English, Spanish or Portuguese to USAID. **Comments must be received by June 23, 2005.**

Please send comments to the three addresses listed below:

- cocampbell@usaid.gov Connie Campbell, Coordinator of USAID’s Amazon Basin Conservation Initiative
- jbisson@usaid.gov Jerry Bisson, Environment Team Leader for USAID/Latin America and Caribbean Bureau
- lcornwell@usaid.gov Laura Cornwell, Biodiversity Advisor for USAID/Latin America and Caribbean Bureau